

# A DAY AT CHATSWORTH AND HADDON.

THEO LEDYARD CUYLKE

Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book (1844-1848); Nov 1844; 29, American Periodicals  
pg. 231

## A DAY AT CHATSWORTH AND HADDON.

BY THEO. LEDYARD CUYLER.

DURING my pleasant sojourn at my "English home" in Yorkshire, I was invited to accompany my host and his family on a visit to Haddon Hall and Chatsworth, in the neighbouring county of Derbyshire. Our ride afforded a good specimen of the rural scenery of England. The road for the whole distance was as smooth as marble, with not even the slightest stone in the way to disturb the easy railroad motion. The first part of our ride lay through a valley, cultivated like a garden. The meadows were the liveliest green; the hedges looked like dark upheavings of the green sward; clumps of trees hung over the road-side, through which there was occasionally a silver gleam of still water or a meandering brook. Bye and bye the country grew more rough, the trees began to die out, and we were soon on a stony moor. Here nothing grew but furze and weeds, which afforded a safe hiding place for game of various kinds. These moors are preserved for shooting purposes, although the plough is every year making gradual incursions upon their wild barrenness.

Presently the moor gave place again to a cultivated landscape, and soon we saw the groves and lawns of Chatsworth rising before us. A flag was floating from a tower on an adjoining hill to advise "the neighbours" of the presence of his Grace "the Duke," who was on his summer visit to his mansion, and entertaining his friends with the August "shooting" over his preserves. A little village lies in one corner of the park. Every house in it is a beautiful stuccoed cottage in the Elizabethan style. They were all built so by order of the duke, as an ornament to his park, although it is said the unreasonable occupants grumbled exceedingly when the old thatched roofs were pulled down over their heads to make room for their flaunting successors. We concluded to visit the mansion on our return, and rode on through the park towards Haddon Hall. At every turn we started up whole troops of deer, who scampered over the green turf on the wings of the wind. The river Wye wandered by our side, and strove to prolong its way through the enchanting landscape by winding, curving and "doubling" at every possible opportunity; and when it could no longer find a decent excuse for lagging, it stole out reluctantly and prattled off down through the wild valley to make amends for lost time. A little stone bridge thrown over its clear waters, which are filled with trout, leads into the grounds of Haddon. This Haddon Hall is the ancient residence of the Vernons, and is considered the finest remaining specimen of the baronial hall of the olden time. The

Duke of Rutland keeps it in the precise style in which its former occupants left it, with a porter at the lodge hard by, and the "latch string not pulled in." When we walked through the rude old doorway, spanned over with a long trailing ivy, and entered the paved courtyard, I expected to meet some of the veritable Vernons, in full costume, coming out to join in the morning chase. The chapel, in one corner of the court, is dark and gloomy, and the pictures on the stained glass are dim, but on these rude benches Queen Elizabeth once sat, and out of the hollowed stone by the doorway *Dorothy Vernon* crossed her fair brow with the holy water. The ball-room is yet hung with the identical tapestry which her hands wrought. A cradle stands in one of the stone chambers in which the little Vernons were sung to sleep by some wild old ditty, preserved for the wonder of this generation, in Percy's Reliques. The bottom of the cradle is gone—sad emblem of the ancient house of the Vernons, who "fell through" long ago. The bed is even standing now in which Queen Elizabeth slept during her visit to the castle—the sheets looking like burnt paper from the effects of time and dust. That royal rowdy, George IV., sent for this bed when on a visit to Derbyshire, and slept in it one night. It was "of a piece" with his other pranks, which he played whenever his native vulgarity and riotous buffoonery got the better of his assumed kingly dignity.

I was deeply interested in the *dining hall*, which remains entire. This is the scene of the feast in the opening chapters of "*Ivanhoe*." Here is the stone floor; the huge fire-place, large enough to accommodate a "log heap" of one of our western settlers; the gallery in which the pipers played during the entertainment; the *dais* or raised platform, on which the gentry and the master of the feast were seated; and the uncouth dishes are even preserved. It was hard to repeople such a forlorn, wild apartment, among the arched ceilings of which the swallows were twittering and building their nests, with the fabled beauties of that splendid romance. The *Rowenas* of that day must have been made of "sterner stuff" than their delicate successors, to have enjoyed a feast at such a table, from such dishes, and in such boisterous company. What they had to cover their tables I could conjecture from a visit to the larder and kitchen. There were ovens enough to have baked for an army, and the meat-blocks were intended evidently for a whole ox! The blood-dyed chips are still lying on them to mark the ravages of the butchers who prepared the feast for the Virgin Queen. I

could fancy the time when the fire was roaring up that old chimney, and the ovens were all in full blast, with some Gurths and Wambas seated in the chimney corner; troops of servants, sweating under the load, were bearing in haunches of venison on enormous pewter platters. The butler has just tapped a fresh cask to fill the royal tankard already three times exhausted. Another bullock is brought in by the "men of blood" and laid on the block, and another invoice of barley loaves have been shovelled into the ovens. There is a cry from the banqueting hall for "*more ale*," which makes the old arches ring again; and the minstrels have just struck up another stave of a drinking song, with the whole company in "full chorus!"

"Now rose the riot and the din,  
Above, beneath, without, within!  
From the lofty balcony  
Rang trumpet, shalm, and psaltery;  
Their clanging bowls old warriors quaffed,  
Loudly they spoke, and loudly laughed.  
Their tasks the busy sewers ply,  
And all in mirth and revelry."

But we have no more time to spend over those riotous scenes which such mementos cannot but call up, and we will leave Haddon for Chatsworth. In leaving we will pass out by the postern door, the same through which the celebrated Dorothy Vernon eloped with George Manners, whom she afterwards married. The old oaken door still swings, the stone steps are there, and the velvet sod, and the solemn green tree hangs over the doorway; but poor Dorothy is long since gone down to "darkness and the worm." By the same road over the stone bridge, and along the green banks of the Wye, we returned to the park of Chatsworth.

In going from Haddon to Chatsworth you pass at once through two hundred years. Haddon is the home of the nobility two centuries ago just as they left it; Chatsworth is the most princely abode of that same nobility in our own day. The difference between them is the progress which England has made in refinement and luxury since that time. I have not been able to give any definite description of Haddon, neither shall I, of Chatsworth. Such a thing is impossible; a writer can only give a few statistics at best, and leave the imaginations to paint the scene.

With the exterior of Chatsworth I was disappointed. It is too French;—there is too much gilding and carving, and ostentatious parading of gaudy pilasters. Its size is enormous, being upwards of two hundred feet in length, but it is so completely broken up, and so lacking in unity, that the spectator is at a loss to know how such a mass of materials were ever piled together at such an enormous expense with such poverty of effect. Within, every thing is gorgeous, and, as far as I remember, in very good taste. Here, as in every such place, the visitor is stunned and wearied by the ever-beginning, never-ending displays of boundless magnificence. A rosy-cheeked lassie, well dressed and extremely civil, conducted us through the apart-

ments. Just at the entrance we met a young nobleman—a guest of the duke's—with a companion, going out on a fishing excursion. It is the custom of the host, at these seasons of summer ruralizing, to leave his guests to entertain themselves till dinner time, and the coachman stands in the hall to receive orders for the stable, the kennel, or any other part of the hospitable entertainer's establishment for which they may have a preference. At seven, P. M., they are all to present themselves in full dress at dinner, and the rest of the day is spent in his society.

In going through the rooms I noticed fine busts of Fox and Canning, and many capital pictures by Lawrence and Reynolds. The collection of statuary is superb. There is a splendid "Mother of Napoleon," by Canova. It is just what we should expect for the mother of Napoleon;—the lofty air of decision and invincible resolution, the naturally royal bearing, and all the fine classic features of the illustrious son are plainly marked in the mother. Many of the ceilings were by Thornhill and Verrio, in the highest style of the art. The coronation chairs of George IV., and of William IV. and his queen, are exhibited in the state apartments. These were given to the duke as a *perquisite* of his office of lord chamberlain. I would like, if it were possible, to give the reader some idea of the library, which was by far the most exquisite apartment I saw in Europe. It is not large, but is furnished with the highest splendour, and in the highest taste. The mantel-piece was of the finest Carrara marble, the curtains displayed the soft blending of the rainbow, and the carpet sunk under my feet like the velvet turf in the lawn without. To recline on one of those damask couches, and pore over the splendid copy of the *Paradise Lost* which glittered on the shelves, while the murmurs of the fountain in the courtyard fell on the ear, would be an amazing help in trying to realize some of the enchanting descriptions which it contains.

In speaking of the outward appearance of Chatsworth, I had no reference to the grounds, which are exceedingly beautiful. Fountains, statues, flowers and green trees have been most tastefully blended in every variety of shape, and beneath all is the soft carpeting of English turf. There is one fountain which throws a jet ninety feet high. Another is in the shape of a dead willow tree, (made of copper,) under which the gardener invites the visitor to take a seat, and suddenly a shower is poured down upon him from the extremities of all the branches. In another place the water is thrown down an artificial cascade, made of wood, and extending some hundred feet like a long pair of stairs. At a given signal the water is "let on," and down it goes, hopping along circumspectly from one step to another, and evidently relieved when it gets to the foot of the stairs and slips out through a private drain provided for the purpose. Such a device is worthy of a place among the *Etnas* and *Vesuviusess* in the panoramas of Niblo's or McAran's.

But the crowning glory of Chatsworth is the *Conservatory*, which is esteemed the finest in the world. Let the reader imagine a glass building as large as the Philadelphia State House,—with which most of them are familiar,—of a semicircular shape, and ornamented with panes of glass cut in every conceivable shape. At each end of this spacious hall is a large doorway, through which the duke often drives in a coach and four. Around the upper part of the glass palace is a gallery by which you can walk among the tops of the stately shrubs and trees that grow on the ground beneath. Here are congregated trees from every part of the globe, with birds and monkeys among the branches. Humble violets and delicate fucias are stealing out among the artificial rocks, fragrant magnolias are breathing on the balmy air, golden oranges glitter among the dark green foliage, and huge clumps of bread fruit dangle in the air, ready to drop into your lap—every thing that is pleasant to the eye and grateful to the smell is around you, overpowering your senses by their beauty and fragrance. This conservatory is a great hobby with "his grace." He visits it frequently every day, and takes great pleasure in conducting strangers through it.

The Duke of Devonshire is a handsome bachelor of fifty or over, very accomplished, and now is considered the first nobleman at court. Before her marriage, he was the favourite partner of the queen,

at the royal balls. His soireés at Devonshire House are the most select gatherings of unadulterated, *unquestionable haut ton* in the kingdom. To the arts he has always extended a most liberal patronage, having visited Italy himself frequently, and brought away many of the masters. The heir of this princely establishment and of his immense fortune, (estimated at three hundred thousand pounds a year,) is the present Earl of Burlington. He too is well known in the world of science and of art, and is worthy of the station he expects to occupy. Some time since the earl lost his beautiful wife, a sister of Lord Morpeth, and the "*Lady Coventry*" of her time—although I do not know that she ever wrought any such *feats* of admiration as are recorded of this latter celebrated beauty, who once kept a whole inn-full of people sitting up all night to get a view of her when she rode off in her carriage early in the morning!

On our way home my friend told me that he had once taken a plain, blunt Yankee, who came to Sheffield on some cutlery speculation, to visit Chatsworth. Nothing that he could show him, however, excited in him the least astonishment—he had evidently seen such before, and a "plaguy sight handsomer." When they returned home, my friend asked him what he thought of it. "Well," replied the Yankee, with some hesitation, "I thought it *was* rayther a pretty location!"